

David Leggett

Born in Springfield, MA, 1980
Lives and works in Chicago

Education

2007 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, MFA
2003 Savannah College of Art and Design, BFA

Solo Exhibitions

2012 *Coco River Fudge Street*. Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago
It's getting to the point where nobody respects the dead. Fresh to death.
Western Exhibitions, Chicago
David Leggett: New Paintings. Hinge Gallery, Chicago
2010 *Up for the Down Stroke*. 65 Grand Gallery, Chicago

Group Exhibitions

2013 *Hoochie Coochie. Man* Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York
2012 *Romancing the Tone*. Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh
Afterimage. DePaul Art Museum, Chicago
Where My Clone At? Double Break, San Diego
Where My Clone At? 2. POVevolving Fine Art Printing Studio, Los Angeles
Blaque Lyte. ADA Gallery, Richmond, Virginia
B.A.D. Beverly Arts Center, Chicago
2011 *Museum as Hub: Alpha's bet is not over yet!* The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York
Kondra 11 Contemporary Art Festival. Thessaloniki, Greece
Is this thing on? Cobalt Studio, Chicago
People Don't Like to Read Art. Western Exhibitions, Chicago
West, Wester, Westest Pt. 2. Fecal Face Dot Gallery, San Francisco
Futuro Perfecto. Zora Space, Brooklyn
Drop it like it's not. Murder Town Gallery, Chicago
Psycha-Bobble. High Concept Laboratories, Chicago
hArts for Art. LVL3 Gallery, Chicago
Skowhegan Alumni Exhibition. 92Y Tribeca, New York
Heads on Poles. Western Exhibitions, Chicago

- 2010 *Ah, Wilderness!* Ebermoore Gallery, Chicago
SK10-New works from the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Class of 2010. Tompkins Projects, Brooklyn
- 2008 *Disinhibition: Black Art Blue Humor.* Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago
Re:visions. Zolla Lieberman Gallery, Chicago
- 2007 *Half & Half.* Sound Alternative Space for Contemporary Art, Laredo, Texas

Selected Bibliography

- 2012 Langbein, Julia, "Critic's Pick: 'After Image' at DePaul University Museum," *ArtForum*
 Jackson, Danielle, "Cotton Candy Sweet as Gold: A Conversation with David Leggett," *Sixty Inches From Center*
 Yeapanis, Stacia, "OtherPeoplesPixels Interviews David Leggett," *The Other Peoples Pixels Blog*
 Bellware, Kimberly, "Coco River Fudge Street" *The Chicagoist*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "Now That's Fresh" *Art Slant*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "David Leggett: It's getting to the point where nobody respects the dead. Fresh to Death," *Flavorpill*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "Coco River Fudge Street," *Flavorpill*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "Rackroom Interview," *Art Slant*
 Glass, Claire, "Portrait of the Artist: David Leggett," *Newcity Art Beautiful/Decay Book: 7, Class Clowns*
- 2011 Weinberg, Lauren, "'People Don't Like To Read Art' at Western Exhibitions: John Parot, Deb Sokolow and other artists make text sexy," *Time Out Chicago*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "People Don't Like to Read Art at Western Exhibitions," *Art Slant*
 Burke, Stephanie, "Drop it like it's not at Murdertown Gallery," *Art Talk Chicago*
 Ritchie, Abraham, "Heads on Poles at Western Exhibitions," *Art Slant*
 Fox, Laura, "Heads on Poles at Western Exhibitions," *Newcity Art*
- 2010 "Interview: David Leggett," Black Visual Archive
 Ritchie, Abraham, "Chicago's Best of 2010 Pick: 'Up for the Down Stroke' at 65 Grand," *Art Slant*
 Schmidt, Shannon, "David Leggett at 65GRAND," *Chicago Art Magazine*
 "Up for the Down Stroke at 65 Grand Gallery," *Daily Serving*
 "Up for the Down Stroke at 65 Grand Gallery," *Beautiful Decay*

Artist Talks and Lectures

- 2012 The School of the Art Institute, Interlink Visiting Artist Program, Chicago

Coco River Fudge Street, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago

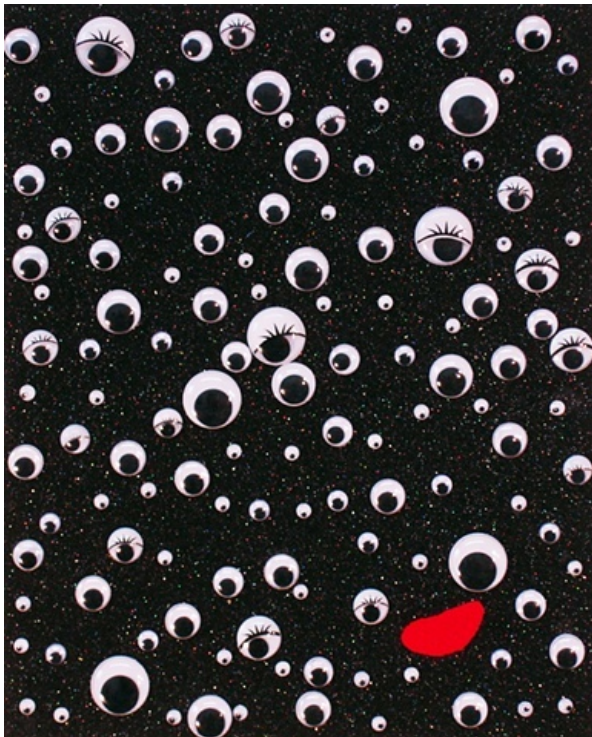
Residencies and Awards

2010	Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME Fellowship Award, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, ME The Drawing Center Viewing Program, New York
2009	3Arts, Visual Artist Award, Chicago
2005-2007	Trustee Scholarship, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
2005	Fellowship Award, School of the Art Institute, Chicago
2000-2003	Merit Scholarship, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA

Interview with David Leggett: – Abraham Ritchie

Chicago, Jan. 2012 – David Leggett's work is raw, offensive, smart, funny, considered and glorious. Able to address both Lil Wayne and the major German painters of the 1980s, Leggett levels hypocritical art world pretensions and engages popular culture, all while paying respect to the heavyweights of art history and innovating an artistic approach that is uniquely his own. Challenging prevailing tastes and outdated notions of media hierarchy, Leggett makes frequent use of craft supplies in his art using things like googly eyes, colorful felt, pom pom balls and glitter. The quirky materials belie the serious subjects that sometimes underlie his work, topics like racism, homophobia and discrimination.

I spent a recent Saturday afternoon with David Leggett talking about his work in his studio, while the artist was preparing for his upcoming concurrent shows at Western Exhibitions and the Hyde Park Art Center, both of which are now on view. Like any good conversation with an artist, the topic quickly turned to issues of taste, power and preference in the art world.



David Leggett. *Darkness*. 2011. Felt and googly eyes on canvas; Courtesy of the artist

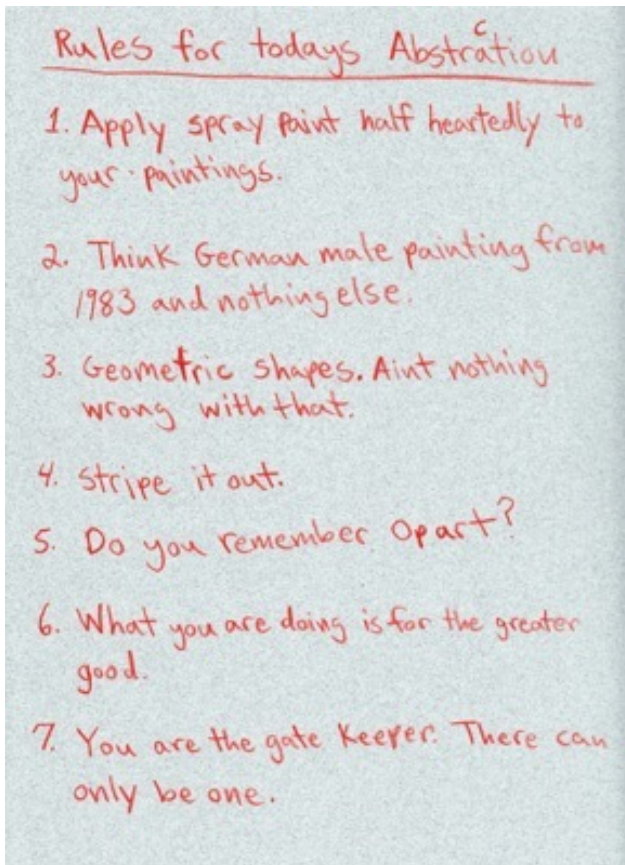
Abraham Ritchie: *So you think that a lot of young artists in New York are making Chicago Imagist type of work?*

David Leggett: Well they don't know that they are making Imagist work.

When I was at Skowhegan I had to make sure people knew who I knew. I had to talk about Imagists and remind people of them.

How I heard about the Imagists was when I was living in Savannah and being an illustration major [at the Savannah College of Art and Design] I always wanted to find new artists. I stumbled on this history book that had the Imagists and Peter Saul as well as the funk artist William T. Wiley who I really, really liked.

So I would talk about these people from time to time and no one would know who they were. It was strange to me because I thought they had interesting work. It obviously made sense to me because I was an illustration major at the time and these were narrative painters. But other people just saw it as flat out illustration.



David Leggett. *Today's Rules*. 2011. Pencil on paper; Courtesy of the artist.

AR: Sure.

DL: People still have this 1950s mentality that they need to distance themselves from this. That I don't want to be popular. That I want to be thought of as a deep thinker.

AR: This is sort of the capriciousness of the art world isn't it?

DL: Yeah.

AR: And that reflects too in your work doesn't it? In a lot of the jokes-

DL: Yes.



David Leggett. *King Pleasure*. 2010. Acrylic and gold leaf on canvas; Courtesy of the artist.

AR: *I mean there's a discrimination out there towards art that isn't from certain places, or even of a certain medium.*

DL: Yeah. I made a Basquiat painting, it's of me and Basquiat—

AR: *Sure it's over there! [gesturing]*

DL: [laughter] Yeah it was the one painting I didn't want to sell, I gotta keep this one! But it was the first painting I made for the show; it was after someone had an argument with me about Basquiat. I think Basquiat is well-liked outside of the art world. I remember absolutely loving him when I was seventeen; I don't care for it that much now, but still, [I'm a] huge fan. But we were talking about him, about Basquiat, and there was something about the conversation where it seemed like -- did he really dislike him? Or do you dislike him because he's out of fashion right now? With the list of artists that he went through I don't see how he could like them and then not like Basquiat.

AR: *Do you think it's because Basquiats are doing well in the market?*

DL: I think so. I think people don't want to like something that popular. Particularly the art world doesn't want to like someone that's famous outside the art world.

I've met plenty of people who don't know a thing about painting who know who Basquiat is, and they'll have a book about Basquiat or something. I don't understand why, but they love him. And that interests me a lot, that there's this black artist out there that people really like. I mean there was a *30 Rock* reference to Basquiat, that's so bizarre to me. So I had to make a painting.

AR: *So what else are you working on in here? I see that a Jesus is in there, like from a religious tract. What's the interest in mass-produced imagery, both the scared and profane? How do you select what you include from mass culture?*

DL: Well, for instance, someone once told me about Spring Thomas, this porn actress whose niche is that she's a southern belle who only sleeps with black guys; doesn't matter what they look like, as long as they have a big dick she'll sleep with them. So I started to look at the

videos online and they're amazing [sarcastically] because I . . . can't . . . believe . . . they went there. I mean it's like her saying the n-word and that's like supposed to anger the black guys, and then they all attack her and have sex with her. I started printing out a lot of stuff from her website.

AR: So what's the interest in the mass-produced religious handouts and imagery?

DL: It's something I grew up with. I've always been interested in that Jesus reproduction. I had to look for that particular one, the more popular one that everyone is familiar with—

AR: That blond haired, blue eyed one?

DL: Yeah . . .

ArtSlant would like to thank David Leggett for his assistance in making this interview possible.

—[Abraham Ritchie](#)

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

DAVID LEGGETT: *COCO RIVER FUDGE STREET*

January 15, 2012 – April 29, 2012

Gallery 5

Coco River Fudge Street presents the most recent and humorously disturbing series of works on paper by emerging artist, David Leggett. This showcase of nearly two-hundred small-scale drawings, prints, collages, and paintings on paper by the Chicago-based artist, reveal his provocatively unhinged state-of-mind.

For the past year, David Leggett has created an artwork a day for his blog project *Coco River Fudge Street*, named after a fictitious location invented by the artist “to sound funny, dirty, and tasty at the same time.” His drawing blog has features including By Request Tuesdays, where anyone can email him a suggestion topic for a work and Old School Fridays, which he features a drawing he is particularly embarrassed about from his undergraduate body of work. All of the other days are filled with enticing artwork in an authentic style he has been cultivating over the past several years. The works primarily on paper chronicle Leggett's comically dark thoughts and musings on current events in pop culture, his personal relationships, and casual conversations he has overheard between strangers on the street, L train, or at parties and other locations. New paintings by David Leggett are also featured at [Western Exhibitions](#) in It's getting to the point where nobody respects the dead. Fresh to death. on view from January 27 until March 10, 2012. His latest mid-sized mixed-media paintings wrestle with complicated feelings towards his two obsessions, painting and hip-hop, as he confronts race, sexuality, fame and class in humorous and ambiguous situations.

Born in Massachusetts, [David Leggett](#) moved to Chicago in 2003 to study painting and drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he received a MFA. He is the recipient of several awards for his artwork, including the Fellowship Award for Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the 3Arts Visual Artist Award. His work has been exhibited throughout the United States at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, the New Museum of Contemporary Art (NY), and Sound Alternative Space for Contemporary Art (TX), as well as around Chicago at Western Exhibitions and 65 Grand.

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Portrait of the Artist: David Leggett - Claire Glass

David Leggett paints while listening to the stand-up comedy of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy, which serve as kindling for his sometimes cartoonish, playfully rendered mixed media artworks. “In the early 1990s when Def Comedy came along, it was extremely popular, but if you listen now, it was horrible,” Leggett says. “They were doing impersonations of Eddie Murphy and Richard Pryor just using the punch lines. Saying ‘dick’ and ‘pussy’ doesn’t make it funny. Those are just words, and that’s kind of how I see some artists—they can say ‘Oh I’m riffing on this,’ but so what?” From his process to his product, Leggett is interested in inauthentic reproductions of 1980s art and hip-hop culture.

Leggett laughed readily, both at himself and his work, discussing his first solo show at Western Exhibitions, titled “It’s getting to the point where nobody respects the dead. Fresh to death.” Leaning back on a small chair in his compact East Garfield Park studio, narrowed further by layers of leaning paintings, Leggett said his work is not a “moral compass.” He treaded lightly on questions of racial or political tension, and when questioned about stamps of men in black face that appear in earlier works, he answered with an incredulous giggle that he bought the stamps on eBay, fascinated by the fact that they existed at all.

Leggett, who grew up in western Massachusetts and came to Chicago to attend SAIC in 2003, seizes his fair share of iconic imagery. But unlike those comedians, who call up infamous one-liners that rely on conjuring memories of having laughed, Leggett’s renderings do not attempt to reclaim their subjects. In the painting “A Natural Death,” the word “Jackson” is diagonally scrawled in white cursive. Pink, white and black drips and lines fill the canvas, over which a sparkly skull presides, implying the whittling away of both Jackson’s postmortem identities. “Historically, once you die, people forget all of the horrible things you’ve done, and that was my interest,” Leggett laughs, easily locating humor in dark places. “Now that they’re dead, people focus on elements of their music and their art and not the poor decisions they made in their lives.”



In his painting “Burr,” Leggett presents a Theo Huxtable-inspired face beside an image of porn star Spring Thomas performing fellatio on a black penis surrounded by small felt triangles in primary colors—think your old Trapper Keeper—over which a pink, felt penis hovers dwarfed. He grew serious to address the often-overlooked “Theo Huxtable Experience.” “I’m interested in black artists who grew up in the suburbs,” he says. “I would love to see the Theo Huxtable experience—parents still together, parents went to college—represented.” Pitting the

wholesome against the potentially scandalous, Leggett added, is an obvious one-liner, relying on the audience's preconceived connotations to generate reaction. "People appropriate other cultures—black people appropriate black culture as well—if they've never experienced hip-hop or the projects. It's very obvious. It's very photocopied."

A concurrent solo show, at the Hyde Park Art Center, is showing a collection of nearly two-hundred drawings by Leggett, the product of his blog by the same name. Leggett made one drawing daily, organized in radio station fashion for audience collaboration with Request Tuesdays and Old School Fridays.

David Leggett shows at Western Exhibitions, 119 North Peoria, through March 10, and at the Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 South Cornell, through April 29.